ENHANCING ACCESSIBLE
BUSINESS IN BALLARAT

CommerceBallarat
Supporting business across the region

CONTENTS

Enhancing Accessible Business in Ballarat
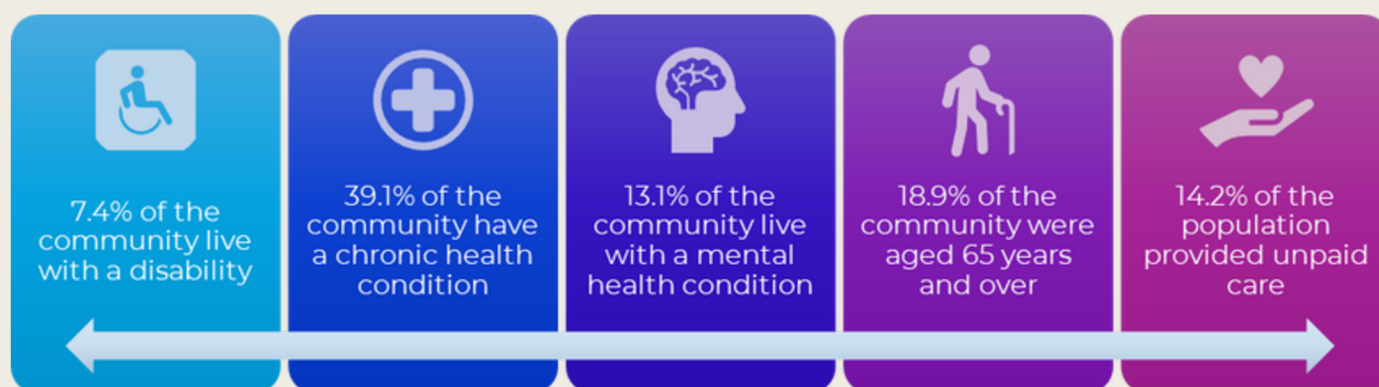
BENEFITS OF ACCESSIBLE BUSINESS

Accessible business includes access to the business, customer service and staff, information, and digital spaces. Accessibility is a matter of human rights, first and foremost. Making your business more accessible has many benefits which include:

- Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act is good for business
- Increased and broadened customer base and loyalty
- Tapping into new customer bases and revenue from these new customers
- Competitive advantage
- Demonstrating a strong commitment to accessibility enhances business reputation and social responsibility
- Complying with accessibility legislation and regulations supports businesses to reduce risk of legal issues and associated costs with potential discrimination complaints, legal action against Council, and costs for legal disputes/action
- Planning for accessibility ensures preparedness for future growth, ageing population, new families, multicultural population growth, children and young people
- Designing for accessibility reduces high costs of retro-fitting later
- Improved retention and attraction of staff

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Planning and consideration of accessibility in your business not only supports people with disability, but ageing populations, chronic health conditions, children, people with short term injuries, linguistically diverse, parents using prams, and more across all life stages. The City of Ballarat has a substantial population of those requiring assistance with everyday life (7.4%) higher than regional Victoria at 6.9%. ABS Census, 2021

7.4% of the community live with a disability	39.1% of the community have a chronic health condition	13.1% of the community live with a mental health condition	18.9% of the community were aged 65 years and over	14.2% of the population provided unpaid care

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Federal Legislation

Disability Discrimination Act (1992), Australian Building Codes and Standards (National Construction Code), Fair Work Act (2009), Work Health and Safety Act (2011), Australian Standard 1428 (Design for Access and Mobility).

Victorian Legislation

Disability Act (2006), Equal Opportunity Act (2010), Building Act (1993) and Building Regulations (2018), Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006), Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008).

Increasing the Accessibility of Your Business

ACCESSIBILITY IN PHYSICAL SPACES & ENVIRONMENTS

ACCESSIBILE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

INCLUSIVE SERVICE

INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT

ACCESSIBILITY IN PHYSICAL SPACES & ENVIRONMENTS

Universal design is a concept which promotes that all people, regardless of their abilities, needs, age, gender, education, or background, can comfortably and efficiently use a space, product, or service without requiring any modifications or adaptations. Universal design is based on seven principles:

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple and Intuitive Use
- Perceptible Information
- Tolerance for Error
- Low Physical Effort for Use
- Size and Space Approach and Use

Accessible physical environments include:

- Ramped or level access as opposed to stair access at entrances with circulation space
- Handrails and obstacle free paths of travel
- Ramp or lift access to all levels
- Unisex accessible toilets and or adult change facilities
- Secured doormats, slip resistant and even flooring
- Welcoming assistance dogs
- Wide doorways and automatic doors
- Accessible emergency exists
- Braille signage and way finding signs
- Accessible height counters and door handles
- Clear lighting throughout
- Seating with backs and armrests
- Adjustable lighting throughout
- Temperature regulation
- A seat or chair for customers to rest
- Sensory spaces
- COVID PPE
- Clutter free hallways
- Accessible wayfinding signs, including braille and audio for accessible toilets and elevators.
- Accessible parking spots
- Acoustics to minimise background noise

Commerce Ballarat
Supporting business across the region

- If your business is accessible, let people know and promote accessibility features via your website or communications for example: we have automatic doors at the entrance, signage, and two accessible toilets.
- Ensure your staff know where the closest accessible public toilets and car parking spots are to your business.
- Provide information with your customers on how to access your business for example: transport options and how people with disability can enter your business (i.e. alternative entrances).
- Provide a designated power point or recharge space for scooters or wheelchairs.
- Ensure that people with guide or assistance dogs feel welcome with their dog.
- Offer a quiet hour to welcome customers who may have sensory needs to your business (this is done by turning music down, signage and dimmed lights).
- Provide a range of options for people with disability to access your goods or services (online order, QR codes on tables, phone orders).
- If your business does not have an automatic door, leave this open with a doorstop.
- Provide printed signage with symbols directing people to the entrance, toilets etc.
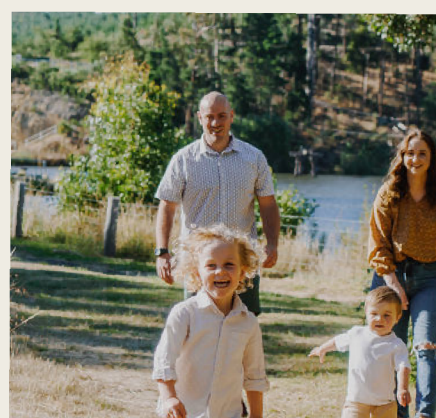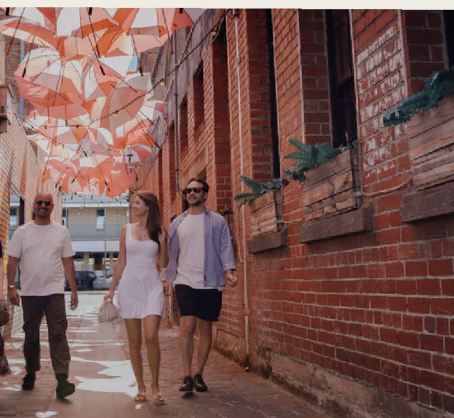
ACCESSIBILE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Digital accessibility involves eliminating barriers that prevent people with disability accessing and interacting with digital content. Digital content includes webpages, online documentation, social media content, articles and more.

Digital accessibility can benefit a wide range of community members of diverse abilities, ages and backgrounds. The table below highlights considerations for those accessing and interacting with online content:

User Need	Consideration
People who are blind or have low vision May have partial or complete inability to see or recognise colour contrasts and may be unable to view small text and images. May use screen readers, braille readers or screen magnification.	• Utilise alt text for all images portraying essential information. • Ensure users can resize text or images up to 200% without losing readability or content (test that the content fully usable when text is enlarged up to 200 per cent). • High contrast between text and background colours • A minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1 between the text (or images of text) and its background is required. For large-scale text (at least 18-point regular or 14-point bold), a lower contrast ratio of 3:1 is acceptable. • Word or HTML as an alternative to PDF format as PDFs can frequently be inaccessible. • Ensure web content can be navigated using a key board alone. • Documents and webpages must have structure, including clear headings and individual sections for content • Use fonts that are easy to read (Arial, Verdana) and 12pt size. • Provide text descriptions of visual elements of charts or graphics, provide audio description within video content.
People who are deaf or hard of hearing May use hearing aids or captioning.	• Provide transcripts of video or audio content • Provide synced captions for all prerecorded video content with audio • Enable live captions through MS Teams or Zoom for meetings. • Sign language interpretation for online events. • Ensure video content has clear audio

People who have disability impacting their motor or mobility May have an inability or difficulty in using mouse or keyboards. May use voice command technology to operate their computer and speech recognition systems. May be reliant on keyboard to navigate all online content.	• Ensure websites and content can be accessed and navigated using a keyboard alone. • Ensure functionality that is triggered by moving the device (shaking, planning a mobile device or by user movement) can be disabled. • The navigation order of links is logical and intuitive.
Neurodiversity May experience sensory sensitivities or have difficulty processing information.	• Concise and direct text • Using Sans Serif font • Avoid background sounds on web content • Avoid vivid colours • Avoid automatically moving, scrolling or blinking content • No page content flashes more than three times per second. • Font size should be 12-14 point or equivalent. • Avoid moving or flashing images and animations. • Some dyslexic people find that larger line spacing improves readability. 1.5 spacing is preferable. • Avoid underlining and italics as this can make the text appear to run together and cause crowding. Use bold for emphasis. • Avoid using all capital letters and uppercase letters for continuous text.

Commerce **Ballarat**
Supporting business across the region

|	
Developmental, cognitive and intellectual disability May respond best to plain language.	• Avoid using words that may be ambiguous, unfamiliar, jargon, or abbreviations • Use short sentences and paragraphs • Use bulleted lists and clear headings. • Use images to help convey meaning • Where possible, provide easy read versions of documentation.
People with psychosocial conditions or disability May experience anxiety, concentration difficulties, cognitive fatigue or memory issues. May use navigation aids as assistive technology	• Use calm colour schemes to minimise triggers and anxiety • Use logical structure • Ensure content is clear and straightforward • Minimise any content which may be overwhelming or overstimulating.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

- Provide captioning, AUSLAN sign interpreters and transcripts (can be booked online via Expression Australia, Red Bee Access or AI Media).
- Providing alt text or descriptions of images in marketing content
- Use the WAVE® free web accessibility evaluation browser extension tool that helps organisations to make their web content more accessible to individuals with disabilities: WAVE Evaluation Tool – Microsoft Edge Addons. You can use this to check the accessibility of your website.

MICROSOFT ACCESSIBILITY FUNCTIONS

Microsoft has an Accessibility Checker which provides you with advice on upgrading the accessibility of your documents: Improve accessibility with the Accessibility Checker – Microsoft Support. This function can be found under the Review tab in the top left corner:
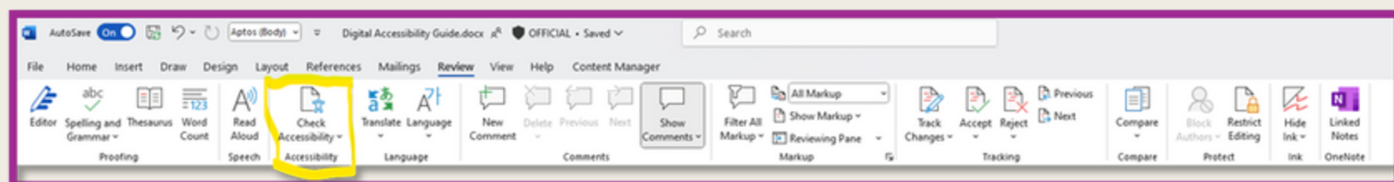
- Alt Text for all images
- Linked headings for navigation
- If using charts and diagrams, provide a table alternative with the data displayed.
- Use Arial or Verdana in 12 pt and 1.5 spacing
- Use high contrast colours and images
- Linked text, use the full URL
- Use bulleted and numbered lists to improve readability
- Descriptive title
- Use consistent ordered headings and heading levels for easy document navigation

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- Create a social story to share with customers with disability what they may expect to experience when engaging with your business. See this guide for developing a social story, & published library of social stories
- Communication boards are used to communicate with customers who may experience difficulties in communicating verbally.
- Develop an access guide for your business
- Offer AUSLAN sign interpreting and live captioning for events
- Including a question capturing the accessibility needs of those attending events or your business in existing surveys or questionnaires.
- Ongoing evaluation of business accessibility through feedback forms

LANGUAGE

Person first language places the person before their diagnosis, disability or condition. Examples of person first language:

- A person with autism
- A person with paraplegia
- Neurodivergent person
- A person living with disability

Instead of:

- Differently abled or special needs, use people with disability.
- Wheelchair bound, use wheelchair user
- Suffers from, impaired, use lives with XX, or living with disability
- Normal, use person without disability
- Disabled parking or disabled bathroom, use accessible parking, accessible entrance, accessible toilet etc.

DISCRIMINATION

Unlawful discrimination according to the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), there are two types of unlawful discrimination:

- Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably due to their disability
- Indirect discrimination occurs when a rule applies to everyone but has an unfair impact on people with disability.

When engaging customers with disability:
- Ask the person how they would like to communicate first, before interacting with them
- Always use your usual tone of voice.
- Kneel or bend to the customer at eye level if they are in a wheelchair.
- Always address the customer with disability, not their carers or friends first
- Always ask if a customer needs help, before stepping in to help them.
- Always allow the customer time to ask or answer questions
- Do not interact with assistance dogs – this can be problematic for customers with disability.
- Do not touch or move a customer's aids, assistive technology, or wheelchair.

- Host accessible meetings including captioning, AUSLAN interpretation and utilising accessible online meeting platforms.
- Become a member of the international Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program
- Celebrating key days of significance for accessibility through social media, posters and participating in campaigns or events to recognise these dates:

o International Wheelchair Day (1 March)
o Neurodiversity Celebration Week (17-23 March)
o World Down Syndrome Awareness Day (21 March)
o Autism Awareness Month (2 April – 31 April)
o International Guide Dog Day (30 April)
o Global Accessibility Awareness Day – 15 May
o Disability Pride Month (1 – 31 July)
o International Day of Sign Languages (23 September)
o Augmentative and Alternative Communication Awareness Month (1 – 31 October)
o National Carers Week (12-18 October)
o Inclusion at Work Week (17 – 21 November)
o International Day of Persons with Disability (3 December)

Commerce **Ballarat**
Supporting business across the region

STAFF TRAINING

Utilise free training opportunities to upskill your staff in disability awareness and accessibility:

Course Name	Link
Introduction to Disability Awareness	https://disabilityawareness.com.au/courses/introduction-to-disability-awareness/
Introduction to Universal Design	Introduction to Universal Design - free course
Introduction to Digital Accessibility	Introduction to Digital Accessibility
What is Autism?	Training - Amaze can empower you to become more autism-inclusive.
Working with people with an acquired brain injury	Working with ABI (Acquired Brain Injury) Staff Training Website.
Centre for Social Impact Webinar	Unlocking jobs for people with disability with large employers | Webinar | CSI
Disability Advocacy Resource Unit free courses	Courses - Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU)

INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT

- Review and eliminate any non-essential requirements and jargon in a position description and advertisement for a role
  - Example: ability to conduct work related travel.
- Engage people and advisory committees with lived experience to audit your recruitment process.
- Ask all candidates if there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made to support them in the recruitment process, this benefits not only people with disability, but also candidates with chronic health conditions and neurodivergent candidtaes. These accommodations may include:
  - Offering online interviews
  - Utilising Zoom for online interviews (most accessible for video conferences).
  - Questions ahead of the interview
  - Providing printed interview questions
  - Provide the option for candidates to bring notes to their interview
- Ensuring the venue where the interview is held is accessible, providing accessibility information prior to the interview for all candidates including parking, toilets and entrances.
- Including an explicit statement on all job advertisements i.e. 'applicants can request a reasonable adjustment at any stage during the recruitment process by getting in touch with the contact person'.
- Explore opportunities to work with local Disability Employment Services (DES) which provide supported employment for people with disability. Visit this website to find a list of local DES: https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/find-a-provider
- Visit the Job Access guide for employers to find out more on how you can recruit and support staff with disability: https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/i-am-an-employer

![Commerce Ballarat logo - Supporting business across the region]

REFERENCE LIST

1.Australasian Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Building Act 1993 (Vic). [online] Available at: https://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/ba199391/.

2.   Australasian Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic). [online] Available at: https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/.

3.   Australasian Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Disability Act 2006 (Vic). [online] Available at: https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/da2006121/.

4.   Australasian Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth). [online] Available at: https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/.

5.   Australasian Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic). [online] Available at: https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/eoa2010250/.

6.   Australasian Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth). [online] Available at: https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/cth/consol_act/fwa2009114/.

7.   Australasian Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic). [online] Available at: https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/phawa2008222/.

8.   Australian Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). IncludeAbility Final Report. [online] Available at: https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Final-Report-AHRC-IncludeAbility_0.pdf.

9.   Australian Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). Summary IncludeAbility Evaluation Key Findings 2023. [online] Available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fhumanrights.gov.au%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2023-11%2Fsummary_includeability_evaluation_key_findings_2023.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

10. Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. (n.d.). Web and mobile accessibility. [online] Available at: https://universaldesign.ie/communications-digital/web-and-mobile-accessibility.

Commerce Ballarat
Supporting business across the region

11. Centre for Social Impact. (n.d.). Connecting pathways to employment with the work integration social enterprise model. [online] Available at: https://www.csi.edu.au/research/connecting-pathways-to-employment-with-the-work-integration-social-enterprise-model/.

12. Centre for Social Impact. (n.d.). Elements of successful evidence centres: Foundations for a disability employment centre of excellence. [online] Available at: https://www.csi.edu.au/research/elements-of-successful-evidence-centres-foundations-for-a-disability-employment-centre-of-excellence/.

13. Centre for Social Impact. (n.d.). The role of shared resilience in building employment pathways with people with a disability. [online] Available at: https://www.csi.edu.au/research/the-role-of-shared-resilience-in-building-employment-pathways-with-people-with-a-disability/.

14. City of Melbourne. (n.d.). Make your business accessible. [online] Available at: https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/make-your-business-accessible.

15. Greater Shepparton City Council. (n.d.). Promoting Greater Access in Greater Shepparton Guide. [online] Available at: https://greatershepparton.com.au/assets/files/documents/community/aged_disability/Promoting_Greater_Access_in_Greater_Shepparton_Guide.pdf.

16. Inclusion Solutions. (n.d.). Open Doors Project. [online] Available at: https://inclusionsolutions.org.au/what-we-do/open-doors-project/.

17. JobAccess. (n.d.). Employer toolkit: Recruiting people with disability. [online] Available at: https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/i-am-an-employer/employer-toolkit/recruiting-people-disability.

18. JobAccess. (n.d.). I am an employer. [online] Available at: https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/i-am-an-employer.

19. .idcommunity. (n.d.). Assistance. [online] Available at: https://profile.id.com.au/ballarat/assistance.

20. Universal Design Australia. (n.d.). Universal Design Australia Courses. [online] Available at: https://courses.universaldesignaustralia.net.au/offers/7AadCH4h/checkout.

21. VicHealth. (n.d.). Access to buildings. [online] Available at: https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/OFD7---Access-to-buildings.pdf.

22. Victorian Building Authority. (n.d.). Victorian Building Authority. [online] Available at: https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/.

Commerce **Ballarat**
Supporting business across the region